FOIA CONFIDENTIAL TREATMENT
REQUESTED BY GOLDMAN, SACHS & CO.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

before the

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

In the Matter of ABACUS CDO	File No. HO-10911

SUBMISSION ON BEHALF OF GOLDMAN, SACHS & CO.

Richard H. Klapper
Michael T. Tomaino, Jr.
Christopher J. Dunne
SULLIVAN & CROMWELL LLP
125 Broad Street
New York, NY 10004

Attorneys for Goldman, Sachs & Co.

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Goldman, Sachs & Co. ("Goldman Sachs") makes this submission in response to the Staff's proposed recommendation that an enforcement action be brought against Goldman Sachs.[1] No such action is warranted.

[1] This submission is provided solely in connection with the Staff's consideration of possible action against Goldman Sachs, and is made without any admission that the conduct under investigation violated any laws, rules or regulations. Should the Staff decide to make any recommendation that varies in any respect from the issues and positions Goldman Sachs has addressed, we expressly reserve the right to revise this submission in accordance with Rule 5(c) of the Commission's Rules Regarding Information and Other Proceedings, 17 C.F.R. § 202.5(c), and Procedures Relating to the Commencement of Enforcement Proceedings and Termination of Staff Investigations, Nos. 33-5310, 34-9796, 1972 WL 130244, at *1-2 (Sept. 27, 1972). Goldman Sachs also expressly reserves the right to object to the admissibility of this submission and those submitted by any other person in any subsequent proceeding. Finally, Goldman Sachs hereby asserts that this submission constitutes attorney work product and requests that (a) it be treated confidentially and not as a waiver of any privilege or immunity from production, and (b) pursuant to Commission Rule 83, 17 C.F.R. § 200.83, that this submission not be disclosed in response to any request made under the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552.

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

In early 2007, Goldman Sachs acted as the underwriter of privately-placed notes issued in a synthetic CDO transaction known as ABACUS 2007-AC1 ("2007-AC1"). There was nothing unusual or remarkable about the transaction or the portfolio of assets it referenced. Like countless similar transactions during that period, the synthetic portfolio consisted of dozens of Baa2-rated subprime residential mortgage-backed securities ("RMBS") issued in 2006 and early 2007 that were identified in the offering materials (the "Reference Portfolio"). As in other synthetic CDO transactions, by definition *someone* had to assume the opposite side of the portfolio risk, and the offering documents made clear that Goldman Sachs, which took on that risk in the first instance, might transfer some or all of it through a hedging and trading strategies using derivatives. Like other transactions of this type, all participants were highly sophisticated institutions that were knowledgeable about subprime securitization products and had both the resources and the expertise to perform due diligence, demand any information that was important to them, analyze the portfolio, form their own market views and negotiate forcefully at arm's length. And like other transactions with similar lower-rated subprime portfolios, 2007-AC1's performance was battered by the unprecedented subprime market meltdown, which has impaired cashflow to countless noteholders in such transactions and caused many participants in the market to fail altogether.

Now, with the benefit of perfect hindsight about the magnitude of the market downturn, the Staff proposes to charge Goldman Sachs with misrepresenting material facts relating to the offering. Notably, the Staff does not contend that anything about the Reference Portfolio itself was incorrectly disclosed. Rather, the Staff's theory relates exclusively to the role of Paulson & Co., Inc. ("Paulson") – now recognized as a heavy bettor against the subprime market but at the time a relatively unknown hedge fund manager – in making suggestions to the independent selection agent as to the composition of the Reference Portfolio and taking a negative position on that portfolio through a swap with Goldman Sachs. Moreover, the Staff proposes not only to base its charges on theories of negligence under Section 17(a) of the Securities Act of 1933, but also to assert that Goldman Sachs made *intentional* misrepresentations concerning Paulson in violation of Section 10(b) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 and Rule 10b-5 thereunder. There is no basis in the law, the record or common sense for such charges.

First, what *was* important to the note investors, as embodied in Regulation AB, were the offering documents' descriptions of the Reference Portfolio and the distribution of proceeds, which sophisticated institutional investors in asset-backed securities input into their models in order to make their investment decisions based on their views of market and housing trends. This information was accurately disclosed, and the Staff does not contend otherwise. By contrast, we are aware of no synthetic CDO offering that disclosed how the protection buyer would manage the risk it took on, other than to disclose generally that it may do so, as occurred here. Certainly, nothing in Regulation AB requires disclosure of the underwriter's risk management plans, which may shift as parties change their market views and adjust their risk tolerance over time.

Second, given the absence of an affirmative directive in Regulation AB to disclose the involvement of Paulson, the Staff relies on a theory that references in the offering documents to the Portfolio Selection Agent were misleading because they somehow implied that the agent, ACA Capital Management LLC ("ACA"), picked the portfolio in isolation without input from any participant, including ones whose true economic interests at the time were opposite those of the noteholders. But the Reference Portfolio, however it was selected, was fully disclosed and available for all to evaluate on its merits. To the extent that investors took comfort from ACA's involvement, it was only because an independent expert had approved the portfolio, and that is precisely what ACA did. ACA plainly exercised its own judgment in deciding which securities were included (whatever its impression as to the economic interests of Paulson), rejected dozens that it disliked, and was entirely satisfied with the resulting portfolio. Indeed, ACA put its own money behind its analysis by investing in the notes itself and entering into a large swap referencing the portfolio. There is no industry definition of "Portfolio Selection Agent" that implied that ACA would operate within an ivory tower or refuse to consider suggestions made by interested parties in exercising its independent judgment. In fact, it was a customary feature of the market that participants (including those here) often offered their views on potential securities to be included in referenced portfolios, so no one would have been surprised that Paulson was doing so.

Third, and more fundamentally, while Paulson's investment strategy and success are well known today, nothing in the record establishes that Paulson's involvement would have been significant in early 2007 to anyone involved in the 2007-AC1 transaction. All participants in the transaction understood that *someone* had to take the other side of the portfolio risk, and the offering documents clearly stated that Goldman Sachs might lay off some or all of the short exposure to the portfolio that it had taken on. A disclosure that the relatively unknown Paulson was the entity to which Goldman Sachs transferred that risk would have been immaterial to investors in April 2007.

Fourth, there is no basis to suggest that the portfolio would have performed any differently or that the economic outcome for the participants would have changed in the least had Paulson's role and interest been more transparent. The portfolio that ACA originally selected had the same characteristics as the Reference Portfolio, and both experienced virtually the same poor performance in the face of the subprime meltdown. Further, the principal note investor, IKB Deutsche Industriebank AG ("IKB"), was an active investor in the CDO markets, had expressed its specific interest in transactions like 2007-AC1, had invested in similar ABACUS transactions before, and thoroughly evaluated the portfolio. ACA was a major player in the CDO marketplace with billions under management and had every reason – reputationally and economically – to perform its job well. ABN Amro ("ABN"), which intermediated Goldman Sachs' swap with ACA, showed little interest in the portfolio and relied instead as a swap intermediary on the credit of its other swap counterparty, ACA, which proved fatal when ACA failed. In the end, every portfolio of lower-rated subprime RMBS was decimated in the market meltdown, and any marginal differences in bond quality underlying the Staff's theory would not have resulted in any materially different outcome.

Fifth, beyond these fatal deficiencies in the Staff's materiality theory, there is no basis for a finding that Goldman Sachs made any alleged misrepresentations about Paulson's role with the negligence required under Section 17(a), much less with the *scienter* mandated by Section 10(b). The Staff has pointed to two ambiguous statements contained in an e-mail from Goldman Sachs that it contends caused ACA to infer that Paulson would be an equity investor. As an initial matter, it is difficult to reconcile such an inference with the Staff's theory that Paulson tried to influence ACA to select dozens of riskier Baa2-rated securities, which would have raised questions about Paulson's true economic interests for any sophisticated market participant. The record, in all events, contains no evidence that Goldman Sachs caused ACA to infer that Paulson had an equity position. Nor does the record support the conclusion that any confusion by ACA as to the nature of Paulson's involvement in 2007-AC1 changed how ACA selected the Reference Portfolio. Similarly, the absence of any disclosure of Paulson's role did not affect IKB's decision to invest. IKB regularly invested through Goldman Sachs and other firms in numerous CDOs and other complex securities and conducted its own evaluations of the underlying reference portfolios, including for the 2007-AC1 transaction.

Finally, the Staff's proposed theory ignores the fact that, as a broker-dealer acting as an intermediary on behalf of a client, Goldman Sachs had a duty to keep information concerning its client's (Paulson's) trades, positions and trading strategy confidential. The Staff itself has recognized this obligation in other contexts, but seeks here to impose a duty to disclose the identity and market views of swap counterparties.

In short, the Staff's contention that Goldman Sachs had a duty to disclose Paulson's involvement in the process by which ACA selected the portfolio is without support in either the factual record or the law, would impose obligations not recognized in existing law and would be directly contrary to market practice, where broker-dealers intermediate between parties taking opposite views and do not disclose those parties' identity or roles to each other. No enforcement action is warranted even on the existing record. If this matter is litigated, Goldman Sachs is confident that a fuller record – including its own discovery of all transaction participants – will underscore that no one in fact considered Paulson's role important and that no one was misled.

THE RECORD

A. Relevant Parties

1. Goldman Sachs

Goldman Sachs is a leading global investment banking, securities and investment management firm that provides a wide range of services worldwide to a substantial and diversified client base that includes corporations, financial institutions, governments and highnet-worth individuals. Through its mortgage group, Goldman Sachs structured and distributed RMBS and CDO-related products.

2. ACA

ACA was the asset management subsidiary of ACA Capital Holdings, Inc., and provided asset management services and credit protection products to investors. As of May 31, 2007, ACA was managing "26 outstanding CDOs with underlying portfolios consisting of $17.5 billion of assets." (GS MBS-E-003525837.) ACA acted as the Portfolio Selection Agent for the 2007-AC1 transaction, invested $42 million in the 2007-AC1 notes, and sold protection to Goldman Sachs on the $909 million notional amount super senior tranche of the transaction.

ACA suffered serious financial troubles at the end of 2007 and beginning of 2008. In November of 2007, ACA posted a $1.04 billion third-quarter loss. After a restructuring supervised by the Maryland Insurance Administration (Maryland's insurance commissioner), ACA Capital Holdings, Inc. is now operating under the name Manifold Capital. ACA is currently operating as a run-off financial guaranty insurance company.

3. Paulson

Paulson is an employee-owned hedge fund founded in 1994. Beginning in 2006, Paulson created two funds, the Paulson Credit Opportunities Funds, which took a bearish view on subprime mortgage loans by purchasing protection through credit default swaps ("CDSs") on various debt securities. These funds earned substantial profits, and have recently received significant media attention. At the time that 2007-AC1 was being transacted, however, Paulson's investment strategy was not yet widely known in the industry. (*See* Kreitman Tr. 40-41; Herald-Granoff Tr. 25.) Paulson now has more than $30 billion under management.

4. IKB

IKB is a German Bank founded in 1924. In January of 2007, IKB Credit Asset Management, the asset management arm of IKB, had approximately "$23.9 billion of assets under management" and "over $16.8 billion of [collateralized loan obligations]/CDOs [had been] launched and managed within IKB group." (GS MBS-E-007698102.) IKB publicly stated that "Securitization and CDO investments are an integral part of IKB AG's business model." (*Id*.) IKB was a highly sophisticated institutional investor that marketed itself as a CDO manager with:

- a large investment team, including 20 portfolio managers and analysts and 20 compliance, IT, legal and operations and surveillance staff;
- "one of the largest databases of CDO structures and performance";
- a "[m]arket leading ABS/CDO evaluation and surveillance platform"; and
- "extensive ABS focused research capabilities and relationships."

(GS MBS-E-007698113; GS MBS-E-007698102.) Indeed, in January of 2007, IKB launched Rhinebridge Plc, a structured investment vehicle that invested heavily in the United States subprime market. Rhinebridge Plc was to be the "flagship vehicle in IKB CAM's expansion into ABS asset management." (GS MBS-E-007698102.)

IKB invested in multiple ABACUS transactions through Goldman Sachs, including ABACUS 2004-1, 2005-3, 2006-11, 2006-15, 2006-8 and 2007-AC1. (*See* GS MBS 0000018045 – 18046; Tourre Tr. Vol. 1, 16.) In fact, IKB made the reverse inquiry that led to the first ABACUS transaction, ABACUS 2004-1. (*See* Tourre Tr. Vol. 1, 16.) In late 2006 and early 2007, Goldman Sachs was working with IKB on a number of transactions, including multiple ABACUS transactions. (*See* Nartey Tr. 23.)

5. *ABN*

ABN is a Dutch bank currently owned by RFS Holdings B.V. ABN was in the business of intermediating CDS between parties that would not or could not accept each other's credit risk. In 2007-AC1, Goldman Sachs would not accept ACA's credit risk without an agreement to post cash collateral, which ACA would not provide. (*See* Gerst Tr. 75.) ABN agreed to intermediate the protection that ACA sold to Goldman Sachs on the super senior tranche of the 2007-AC1 transaction by entering into a CDS with Goldman Sachs and agreeing to post collateral, and then entered into a back-to-back CDS with ACA. (*See* Gerst Tr. 75.). ABN appears to have evaluated only ACA's corporate credit rating, and had little or no interest as to the Reference Portfolio. (GS MBS-E-002485173.) Prior to agreeing to intermediate the transaction, ABN purchased from Goldman Sachs a $27 million CDS providing ABN protection if ACA's credit weakened. (GS MBS-E-003528155.)

B. The Subprime and CDO Market

A CDO is a debt security collateralized by debt obligations, including mortgage-backed securities in many instances. These securities are packaged and held by a special purpose vehicle ("SPV"), which issues notes that entitle their holders to payments derived from the underlying assets. In a synthetic CDO, the SPV does not own a portfolio of actual fixed income assets, but rather enters into CDSs that reference the performance of a portfolio. The SPV does hold some collateral securities (separate from the reference portfolio), which it uses to meet its payment obligations.

Beginning in 2005, the market for CDOs expanded extremely rapidly. According to a study performed by the Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association ("SIFMA"), the Global CDO Issuance Volume for 2005 and 2006, not including unfunded synthetic tranches, was approximately one trillion dollars. (SIFMA, Global CDO Market Issuance Data, *available* *at* www.sifma.org/research/pdf/CDO_ Data2008-Q4.pdf (last visited Sept. 10, 2009).) The markets for mortgage-backed securities became volatile and unpredictable in late 2006 and early 2007. Investors and speculators in those markets developed conflicting views of the future direction of the principal factors that drove the market – housing prices, interest rates, defaults and delinquencies, delinquencies on loans made by different originators or in different regions of the country, the health of subprime originators and other factors – all of which were entirely within the public domain. Some hedge funds, including Paulson's funds, bet aggressively against the mortgage market, while other investors and speculators believed that any weakness in the housing markets or RMBS would be temporary and mild. Up to the middle of 2007, no one view of the market predominated.

C. The ABACUS Transactions Generally

The ABACUS transactions were synthetic CDOs in which the CDO entities sold notes referencing specific portfolios of securities. The proceeds from the sale of the notes were used to purchase collateral securities, which were held by the SPV. At the same time, the SPV entered into a CDS transaction, whereby it agreed to provide a "protection buyer" with "insurance" payments in the event of write-downs on the referenced securities in exchange for periodic premium payments. These premium payments, along with interest on the collateral securities, were used to pay the noteholders. The collateral securities themselves were used either to pay principal to noteholders or to make payments due to the protection buyer under the CDS, depending on the performance of the reference portfolio. The first ABACUS transaction was ABACUS 2004-1, which was developed in response to IKB's desire to invest in AAA, AA and A rated CDO notes referencing a portfolio of high-grade asset-backed securities. (Tourre Tr. Vol. 1, 16, 24.)

D. ABACUS 2007-AC1

ABACUS 2007-AC1 ("2007-AC1") was a synthetic CDO transaction referencing a $2 billion portfolio consisting of 90 Baa2-rated subprime RMBS issued in 2006 and early 2007. (GS MBS-E-005974542; GS MBS-E-002407039-2407041.) The securities issued in the 2007-AC1 transaction were offered in a private placement pursuant to Rule 144A. (GS MBS 0000010089.)

1. The Paulson Reverse Inquiry

In late 2006, Paulson initiated a "reverse inquiry" by approaching Goldman Sachs to determine whether it would enter into a CDS in which Paulson bought protection on a portfolio of Baa2-rated RMBS from the 2006 vintage. To mitigate the significant market risk that it would take on if it entered into the CDS, Goldman Sachs structured two separate transactions.

In the first transaction, Goldman Sachs created the 2007-AC1 SPV, which would issue notes and enter into a CDS through which Goldman Sachs would purchase credit protection on a portfolio of Baa2-rated 2006 vintage subprime securities. The investors that bought the notes issued by the SPV would, by definition, be taking the view that the securities in the Reference Portfolio would perform at least moderately well, while Goldman Sachs as credit protection buyer took the contrary view that those securities would perform poorly. In the second transaction, Goldman Sachs would enter into the CDS that Paulson had requested. To the extent that Paulson's requested CDS portfolio matched the 2007-AC1 Reference Portfolio, Goldman Sachs would effectively neutralize its market risk. (GS MBS-E-003272296; GS MBS-E-003272305.) David Gerst and Fabrice Tourre explained this dual structure to the Staff. (*See* Tourre Tr. Vol. 1, 95; Gerst Tr. 139).

2. The Portfolio Selection Process

ACA, the Portfolio Selection Agent for 2007-AC1, had extensive experience and a strong reputation in the industry. In its role as Portfolio Selection Agent, ACA was to select a portfolio of Baa2-rated RMBS from the 2006 and 2007 vintages to comprise the Reference Portfolio, but would not provide any ongoing asset management or other services.

Goldman Sachs started the portfolio selection process by providing Paulson with a database of RMBS securities and a spreadsheet listing securities that fit Paulson's requirement that the portfolio be restricted to 2006-vintage subprime RMBS that were rated Baa2 by Moody's Investor Service and approximately BBB by Standard & Poor's. (Gerst Tr. 13-14.) Paulson then provided Goldman Sachs with a spreadsheet of 123 securities. Goldman Sachs sent this spreadsheet of 123 securities to ACA for its evaluation and potential inclusion in the 2007-AC1 Reference Portfolio. (GS MBS-E-007974381.)

ACA evaluated each of the 123 securities using its proprietary models and methods of analysis. ACA rejected more than half of the securities, and sent Goldman Sachs a revised spreadsheet listing 86 securities, including 55 from the list of 123 securities and 31 additional 2006-vintage Baa2-rated securities. (GS MBS-E-002537707.) ACA later proposed an additional 26 reference securities. (GS MBS-E-002480599.) Goldman Sachs suggested that two of the proposed securities be rejected, and ACA suggested three replacements. (GS MBS-E-003026086.)

ACA and Paulson then met on February 2, 2007 to discuss the reference portfolio. During this meeting, Paulson proposed a list of securities, nine of which ACA had already rejected. After the meeting, ACA emailed Paulson and Goldman Sachs, reiterating its rejection of the nine securities and attaching a spreadsheet listing 100 securities (79 of which previously had been approved by Paulson and ACA). (GS MBS-E-0038338442.) Paulson suggested removal of eight of the securities (seven of which were removed) and Goldman Sachs suggested removal of two of the securities (one of which was removed). (GS MBS-E-002483508; GS MBS-E-002983660.) Paulson then circulated a list of 90 reference securities. Of these 90, ACA requested that the parties make substitutions for three of the securities. (GS MBS-E-003782252; GS MBS-E-002445333.) ACA proposed eleven alternative securities and Paulson agreed to three out of those eleven securities. (GS MBS-E-002444961-2444962; GS MBS-E-002445333-2445334; GS MBS-E-002444961-2444962.) ACA thereafter agreed to the removal of three New Century securities, and the substitution of three securities to include in the final portfolio.[2] (GS MBS-E-003740868; GS MBS-E-003740867-3740869.)

ACA ultimately approved 90 securities that it stood behind as the portfolio selection agent, albeit from the category of 2006/2007-vintage Baa2-rated subprime RMBS. There is no indication that ACA "rubber stamped" any of the securities suggested by Paulson, or that it behaved in any way that was inconsistent with the normal obligations of a Portfolio Selection Agent. And as a sophisticated market player that managed billions of dollars in subprime securities, ACA should easily have recognized any tendencies or marginal biases in the securities that Paulson recommended.

3. Marketing and Sale of the 2007-AC1 Transaction

Because of IKB's prior interest in ABACUS transactions, Goldman Sachs approached IKB as a potential investor in 2007-AC1. IKB ultimately decided to purchase $150 million in senior certificates with the view that it would have a relatively protected senior position in a risky portfolio. (*See* GS MBS 0000018046.) ACA purchased $42 million worth of

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2 IKB had previously expressed concern over RMBS for which New Century and Fremont were the servicers, which may have been the reason for removing those securities. (GS MBS-E-0029722269.)

senior secured notes. (GS MBS 0000018046.) The 2007-AC1 transaction closed on April 26, 2007. The SPV used the proceeds of the sale to purchase AAA-rated certificates to hold as collateral.

Goldman Sachs entered into a CDS with the SPV in a notional amount of $192 million in which Goldman Sachs agreed to make premium payments in return for protection on the Reference Portfolio. In addition to the CDS purchased from the SPV, on May 31, 2007 Goldman Sachs also entered into a $909 million notional amount CDS referencing the super-senior (50-100%) tranche of the 2007-AC1 CDO. (GS MBS 0000018052.) ABN served as intermediary for this trade by entering into the $909 million CDS with Goldman Sachs and an offsetting CDS with ACA, thereby assuming credit risk if ACA was unable to pay. (GS MBS-E-002485172-2485173.) ABN appears to have principally evaluated only ACA's corporate credit rating before entering into the CDS.[3] (GS MBS-E-002485172-2485173.) The record does not indicate whether ABN entered into other CDS trades with ACA, but Goldman Sachs is confident that a full record would reflect ABN's familiarity with ACA and consistent approach to such transactions as solely credit decisions.

E. The Credit Default Swaps Between Goldman Sachs and Paulson

Through CDSs with Paulson, Goldman Sachs sold all of the protection that it had purchased from the SPV and from ACA (through ABN). (Tourre Tr. Vol. 1, 33.) Because Goldman Sachs purchased protection from ACA on a portion (50-100%) of the super senior tranche, but wrote protection to Paulson on the entire (45-100%) super senior tranche, it bore the

3 In connection with this evaluation, ABN purchased $27 million in corporate CDS protection on ACA from Goldman Sachs, which entitled it to payment if ACA's credit rating fell below a certain level. (GS MBS E-003528155.)

risk that poor performance of the Reference Portfolio would affect the 45-50% portion. (Tourre Tr. Vol. 1, 33.)

The 2007-AC1 Offering Circular could not have been more clear that Goldman Sachs might enter into transactions to increase, reduce or even eliminate its exposure to the SPV:

- "The Protection Buyer is not required to have any credit exposure to any Reference Entity or any Reference Obligation." (GS MBS 0000010105.)

- "[T]he Protection Buyer . . . may hold long or short positions with respect to Reference Obligations and/or other securities or obligations of related Reference Obligations and/or other securities or obligations of related Reference Entities and may enter into credit derivative or other derivative transactions with other parties pursuant to which it sells or buys credit protection with respect to one or more related Reference Entities and/or Reference Obligations. . . . [i]f the Protection Buyer . . . holds claims against a Reference Entity or a Reference Obligation other than in connection with the transactions contemplated in this Offering Circular, such party's interest as a creditor may be in conflict with the interests of the Issuer." (GS MBS 0000010127.)

Nothing stopped any other transaction participant – from the noteholders, to ABN, to Paulson – from similarly reducing or adjusting their own exposure depending on their own perceptions and views as market and economic conditions evolved.

F. The Collapse of the Subprime Market

As was clear to all of the parties, the market for securities backed by subprime loans had already begun to weaken in late 2006, as housing prices stopped increasing and began to decline in some regions of the country. The ABX.HE 06-2 BBB Index,[4] which referenced BBB securities issued in the second half of 2006, decreased in early 2007, reaching a low of $67 on February 27, 2007. It rebounded to as high as $84.5 on May 24-25, 2007 (a week before ACA, ABN and Goldman Sachs entered into the $909 million CDS), and then dropped

[4] The ABX.HE Indices, or Asset-Backed Securities Indices, are synthetic indices distributed by Markit Group, Limited. Each references a basket of 20 CDSs on subprime mortgage-backed securities of a specific vintage and rating.

precipitously from $80.875 on June 11 to $20.5 at the end of 2007. (*See* Appendix 1.) The securities in the Reference Portfolio, which in April 2007 were rated Baa2 by Moody's Investor Service and at or around BBB by Standard & Poor's, were severely affected. The historical performance data relied on by rating agencies, investment banks, government agencies and other participants in the market turned out to be an unreliable predictor of future prices and performance. As reflected by the prices of the ABX indices in early 2007, most sophisticated market participants – including senior government officials – did not predict the severity and breadth of the downturn in U.S. housing markets, and many suffered dramatic losses as a result.

The significant divergence between the expected and actual performance of Baa2-rated RMBSs resulted in large part from the unanticipated severity and breadth of housing market price declines, and the weakening of local economies throughout the United States. The combination of high loan-to-value ratios, the unexpected severity and speed of deterioration in residential housing prices throughout the country and the lack of available refinancing provided little incentive for borrowers to continue making payments on mortgage loans on properties in which they had little or no equity. *See, e.g., Semiannual Monetary Policy Report to the Congress*, Statement of Ben Bernanke, Chairman, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (Mar. 28, 2007). In addition to these unexpected economic factors, an unknown amount of fraud by borrowers, originators, brokers, appraisers and others involved in the loan origination process may have resulted in underwriting of material numbers of loans to borrowers lacking either the means to (or the intention of) making payments on the loans. *See, e.g.*, Tyler Cowen, *So We Thought, But Then Again …*, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 13, 2008, at 6; Carolyn Said, *Plenty of Blame for Lending Mess; Mortgage Meltdown*, S.F. CHRON., Feb. 3, 2008, at C1.

THE STAFF'S INVESTIGATION AND ALLEGATIONS

The Staff's investigation of 2007-AC1 began on August 29, 2008. The Staff has taken five days of testimony from five Goldman Sachs witnesses: Gail Kreitman and Melanie Herald-Granoff, Michael Nartey, Fabrice Tourre, and David Gerst. Goldman Sachs has produced approximately 8,000,000 pages of documents to the Staff.

Goldman Sachs understands that the Staff currently proposes to recommend that the Commission bring an enforcement action against Goldman Sachs alleging violations of Section 17(a) of the Securities Act of 1933 and Section 10(b) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 and Rule 10b-5 thereunder. The Staff contends that:

- Goldman Sachs deceived ACA by leading ACA to believe that Paulson would invest in the equity tranche of 2007-AC1, thereby allegedly causing ACA to believe that Paulson had the same interests as ACA when Paulson's interests were, according to the Staff, the opposite of ACA's interests.

- Goldman Sachs deceived investors in the 2007-AC1 transaction by describing ACA as the Portfolio Selection Agent when, in fact, Paulson had played a significant role in selecting the Reference Portfolio.

To Goldman Sachs' understanding, the Staff's theory is that Goldman Sachs should have made the role of Paulson in the 2007-AC1 transaction clear to ACA, and disclosed that role (and Paulson's identity) in the offering documents. If the Commission chooses to proceed against Goldman Sachs, the Staff has indicated it will seek disgorgement of Goldman Sachs' profits on the 2007-AC1 transaction, as well as penalties and injunctive relief.

DISCUSSION

I. THE ABACUS OFFERING DOCUMENTS CONTAINED NO MATERIAL MISREPRESENTATIONS.

To prove materiality under Sections 10(b) and 17(a), the Commission must show a "substantial likelihood" that the alleged misstatement or omission would be deemed significant by a reasonable investor in light of the "total mix" of information available about the investment at the time the investment decision is made. *Basic, Inc.* v. *Levinson*, 485 U.S. 224, 231-32 (1988). In evaluating whether an alleged misrepresentation was material, the offering documents must be read as a whole, focusing not "on whether particular statements, taken separately, were literally true, but whether defendants' representations, taken together and in context, would have mis[led] a reasonable investor about the nature of the [securities]." *DeMaria* v. *Andersen*, 318 F.3d 170, 180 (2d Cir. 2003) (emphasis added).

The offering documents for the 2007-AC1 transaction provided all material information that the sophisticated institutional investors here required – most fundamentally, the particulars of the portfolio that the investors could (and did) analyze and evaluate on an equal footing with Paulson and Goldman Sachs. The offering documents contained nothing materially false or misleading about ACA's role, and no reasonable investor would have needed disclosures describing the participation of Paulson, which at the time was little-known and only one of many market participants that investors understood routinely took the opposite risk in transactions of this type (and were a structural necessity for synthetic CDOs).

A. The Offering Documents Fully Disclosed the Material Facts Relating to the Reference Portfolio.

Regardless of how the Reference Portfolio was selected, the offering documents comprehensively described each asset backing the securities. Nothing about the selection process affected the inherent value or risks of the Reference Portfolio. The offering documents provided the sophisticated potential investors in 2007-AC1 with the material information about the constituent securities that they needed to perform their own analyses and modeling of the creditworthiness and cash flows of the assets underlying their investment.

Regulation AB recognizes that in an asset-backed securities transaction, investors view information about the asset portfolio and the distribution of proceeds as material, because performance of those assets, as affected by macro-economic factors and trends that any investor can analyze, will dictate the performance of asset-backed securities.[5] Regulation AB thus focuses on the underlying assets, and sets forth in great detail the disclosures required in offering documents for asset-backed securities, including: (1) the title and type of securities being offered, (2) a summary of the flow of funds, (3) statements detailing servicer or other fees, (4) detailed descriptions of the characteristics of the assets, and (5) a description of any credit enhancement features. *See, e.g.*, 17 C.F.R. §§ 229.1102, 229.1103, 229.1105, 229.1111.

The value of the assets underlying asset-backed securities does not change based on any "inside" information within the issuer's control. No subjective corporate judgments about budgets, sales, reserves or any other matters relevant to traditional corporate issuers impact a portfolio of mortgage-backed securities. Accordingly, Regulation AB's comprehensive disclosure scheme does not require any mention of the underwriter's (or its clients') subjective view of the assets, or a comprehensive listing of all of the parties that had input into the selection of the assets backing the securities. Rather, Regulation AB focuses on disclosures of the objective features of the underlying assets, which allows potential investors to perform their own analyses and evaluations based on their assessment of economic trends, regardless of the views of the underwriter or other entities as to the value of the underlying assets. This focus on the intrinsic character of the portfolio also is consistent with the distinction drawn by the courts between "hard" and "soft" information. Only the former must be disclosed to investors:

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[5] Although the ABACUS notes at issue here were offered pursuant to the limited requirements of Rule 144A, Regulation AB's focus on information about the underlying assets and how the proceeds of those assets will be distributed reflects what is material to an investor in any asset-backed transaction.

> Hard information is typically historical information or other factual information that is objectively verifiable. Publicly disclosed, hard information is actionable if false and material. Soft information, on the other hand, includes predictions and matters of opinion. The failure to disclose soft information is actionable only if [it is] . . . virtually as certain as hard facts.

City of Monroe Employees Ret. System v. *Bridgestone Corp.*, 399 F.3d 651, 669 (6th Cir. 2005); *see also Glassman* v. *Computervision Corp.*, 90 F.3d 617, 631 (1st Cir. 1996) ("[T]he federal securities laws focus on the mandatory disclosure of backward-looking hard information, not forecasts.").

In accordance with this regulatory focus, the offering documents at issue here set forth *precisely which* RMBS would comprise the Reference Portfolio. (*See* GS MBS 0000010274-10277.) The offering documents for each of these RMBS in turn disclosed the various categories of information required by Regulation AB, including detailed information concerning the loans held by the trust that issued the RMBS. This is all that was required. The offering documents need not interpret the information they disclose in ways that "might have facilitated an investor's task," because "interpretations drawn from the facts presented in the prospectus[]" do not provide new information, and thus cannot "significantly alter[] the 'total mix' of the information already presented." *Benzon* v. *Morgan Stanley Distributors, Inc.*, 420 F.3d 598, 609 (6th Cir. 2005). In light of the extensive, objective disclosures contained in the offering documents, investors – particularly the sophisticated entities at issue here in the context of a Rule 144A offering – had all the information they needed to understand and evaluate the reference securities, just as a consumer purchaser can evaluate a store's inventory of merchandise regardless of how it was selected, fully understanding that there may be other brands available elsewhere. *See Ley* v. *Visteon Corp.*, 543 F.3d 801, 808 (6th Cir. 2008) ("The federal securities laws do not ordain that the issuer of a security compare itself in myriad ways to its competitors, whether favorably or unfavorably . . . . [I]t is precisely and uniquely the function of the prudent investor, not the issuer of securities, to make such comparisons among investments.”).

B. The Sophisticated Investors in 2007-AC1 Were More Than Capable of Evaluating the Transaction Based on the Portfolio Information.

The sophisticated investors in 2007-AC1 were fully capable of evaluating the Reference Portfolio, and nothing in the record suggests that their analysis turned on how the securities were selected here or, for that matter, in any of the countless other transactions they considered over time.

ACA, as described above, was a well-recognized collateral manager as well as a sophisticated investor in CDOs. It was paid to analyze the Reference Portfolio and approved every security in it. It applied rigorous and disciplined financial modeling to evaluate the portfolio, as it did every day with respect to the billions of dollars it managed.

IKB had long described itself as one of the most highly-sophisticated CDO investors in the world. (*See* GS MBS-E-007698102; *see also Conservative Mittelstand lender IKB has transformed itself into Germany’s biggest investor in structured credit – with a taste for riskier deals*, RISK, February 1, 2004.) It stated in January 2007 that it had launched and managed approximately $16.8 billion of its own CDOs and related securities. (GS MBS-E-007698102.) IKB regularly invested through Goldman Sachs and other firms in CDOs and other sophisticated and complex securities, including ABACUS and other synthetic CDOs in which other parties took the opposite view of the portfolio . (GS MBS 0000018045-18046.) IKB had its own significant capabilities to (a) research and analyze market conditions and relevant, underlying loan data (*e.g.*, housing statistics, ABX index prices and volumes, subprime securities pricing levels, origination volumes and performance of loans in securitized pools), and (b) obtain expert and knowledgeable advice and counsel.

Similarly, in early 2007, ABN was "a leading international bank with total assets of EUR 999 [billion]" and "operate[d] more than 4,500 branches in 53 countries" with a "staff of more than 110,000 full-time employees worldwide." Press Release, ABN AMRO, ABN AMRO Announces Sale of ABN AMRO Mortgage Group, Inc. to Citigroup, Jan. 22, 2007, *available at* http://www.abnamro.com/pressroom/pressreleasedetail.cfm? ReleaseID=278522 (last visited Sept. 10, 2009). ABN regularly assumed credit risk by "act[ing] as an intermediary on behalf of customers or other third parties or issue[d] guarantees." ABN AMRO Holding N.V., 2006 Annual Report at 204, *available at* http://www.shareholder.com/visitors/dynamicdoc/document.cfm?CompanyID=ABN&DocumentID=1448&PIN=&Page=2&Zoom=1 (last visited Sept. 10, 2009). In connection with these activities, ABN's senior management "establish[ed] the credit policies" and "procedures required to analyze, manage and control credit risk." *Id*. ABN closely "monitored on an ongoing basis" the "risk that counterparties might default on their obligations." *Id*.

Consistent with their sophistication, ACA and IKB were Qualified Institutional Buyers within the meaning of Rule 144A. The Master Repurchase Agreement between Goldman Sachs and ACA stated that, with respect to each of the transactions comprising 2007-AC1, ACA agreed that:

> It is acting for its own account, and it has made its own independent decisions to enter into that Transaction. It has evaluated for itself whether that Transaction is appropriate or proper for it based upon its own judgment and upon advice from such advisers as it has deemed necessary. It is not relying on any communication (written or oral) of the other party as investment advice or as a recommendation to enter into that Transaction; it being understood that information and explanations related to the terms and conditions of a Transaction shall not be considered investment advice or a recommendation to enter into the transaction. No communication (written or oral) received from the other party shall be deemed to be an assurance or guarantee as to the expected results of that Transaction. . . .
>
> It is capable of assessing the merits of and understanding (on its own behalf or through independent professional advice), and understands and accepts, the terms,

> conditions and risks of that Transaction. It is also capable of assuming, and assumes, the risks of that Transaction.

(GS MBS-E-009154451.)

Thus, the investors had more than sufficient resources and market knowledge to evaluate the portfolio based on the inherent characteristics of the securities, demand additional information or changes to the portfolio, and decline to invest if they were not entirely satisfied or preferred other investment alternatives. There is no evidence that they approached this transaction any differently than the countless other similar transactions they considered. If this matter is litigated, Goldman Sachs is confident that a full record will show that their behavior here conformed to their overall investment approaches.

C. To the Extent that Investors Considered ACA's Participation Important, ACA's Role Was Described Accurately.

Significantly, the Staff has not alleged that the offering documents for 2007-AC1 misrepresented anything about the Reference Portfolio. Rather, the Staff's position appears to be that investors would have wanted to know that Paulson had input into the *process* by which ACA ultimately selected the RMBS included in the Reference Portfolio, and that the description of ACA as "Portfolio Selection Agent" was therefore misleading without including a description of Paulson's role. That position is fundamentally flawed for several reasons.

As a threshold matter, the Staff's position incorrectly assumes that the term "Portfolio Selection Agent" conveys to investors that the agent selected the portfolio without any input from others. Nothing in the offering documents asserted that ACA was acting in isolation, and no definition of "Portfolio Selection Agent" would create that impression. The Offering Circular, which described ACA's role as Portfolio Selection Agent, merely stated that "[ACA would], pursuant to the Portfolio Selection Agreement . . . select the Initial Reference Portfolio." (GS MBS 0000010178.) Nowhere did the Offering Circular state that ACA would not consult with other entities regarding the selection of the Reference Portfolio, and it was common in CDO transactions for participants to offer views in the process of selecting the referenced assets, as Goldman Sachs and IKB did here. (Herald-Granoff Tr. 26; Narty Tr. 18-19, 57 ("I don't think I can recall a transaction we worked on with [IKB], where we didn't have a back and forth on the portfolio").) *See In re Worlds of Wonder Sec. Litig.,* 35 F.3d 1407, 1417-18 (9th Cir. 1994) (common industry practices require no disclosure). Rather, the Offering Circular states only that ACA would "select" the Reference Portfolio, and the record in this investigation has shown that ACA did so. ACA ultimately approved each security for inclusion in the Reference Portfolio. (*See, e.g.*, GS MBS-E-002537707; GS MBS-E-003838442-3838443.)

Indeed, ACA had served as portfolio selection agent or collateral manager for numerous other transactions, and no doubt was accustomed to an interactive selection process. What is important is that ACA used its own expertise and models in scrutinizing and approving the referenced securities and earned substantial fees for doing so. Whether certain securities were initially suggested by Paulson, Goldman Sachs or IKB, ACA subjected the securities proposed for inclusion in the Reference Portfolio to its own proprietary models and analysis. ACA conducted its own analysis and engaged in significant dialogue with Goldman Sachs and Paulson, and it rejected *75 securities* that Paulson initially proposed. (*See, e.g.*, GS MBS-E-002537707; GS MBS-E-003838442-3838443; GS MBS-E-007974381.)

There is no evidence that ACA included any securities that it thought were inappropriate. Indeed, ACA demonstrated its confidence in the quality of the Reference Portfolio by purchasing $42 million worth of ABACUS 2007-AC1 notes and entering into a $909 million notional value CDS referencing the portfolio. It defies credulity to assert that ACA would have invested $42 million of its own funds and entered into a $909 million CDS based on the Reference Portfolio if it had any concerns about the referenced securities. Although Goldman Sachs has not yet had the opportunity to take discovery of ACA, it is confident that if this matter is litigated, the full record will demonstrate ACA's independence, full conviction about the portfolio it selected and professional work quality in performing its function.

D. Paulson's Economic Interests Were Not Material to Investors.

The Staff's theory appears to be that Paulson's role would have been significant both to ACA in its role as Portfolio Selection Agent and to investors because – like Warren Buffett or E.F. Hutton – it would have raised a red flag that a prominent "short" strategist was betting against the portfolio. Paulson's name and precise role were not material, however, particularly at the time of the transaction.

First, although Paulson's name and his successful strategy of shorting the subprime RMBS market are now well known, they were not in April 2007. Even Goldman Sachs witnesses testified that they had no knowledge of Paulson or its strategies at the time of the 2007-AC1 transaction. (*See* Herald-Granoff Tr. 25; Kreitman Tr. 40-41.) Indeed, the Staff does not contend that ACA had heard of Paulson prior to the 2007-AC1 transaction. The fact that Paulson was unknown to ACA – which, as of May 31, 2007, had 26 CDOs valued at $17.5 billion under management – demonstrates that the fact of Paulson's involvement would not have been material. Nor is there any evidence that IKB or ABN knew of Paulson at the time or would have changed their investment decisions one iota had they fully understood his involvement. Certainly, those will be significant matters in dispute if this matter is litigated.

Second, given the structure of synthetic CDOs such as 2007-AC1, investors understood that *someone* (whether Goldman Sachs, Paulson or another entity) would necessarily be taking a position contrary to the Reference Portfolio. As the CDS counterparty, Goldman Sachs stood to gain if the Reference Portfolio performed poorly (GS MBS 0000010095) unless it entered into an offsetting CDS with another counterparty. The Offering Documents clearly disclosed that Goldman Sachs was the Protection Buyer, and also that the

> Protection Buyer . . . may hold long or short positions with respect to Reference Obligations and/or other securities or obligations of related Reference Entities and may enter into credit derivative or other derivative transactions with other parties pursuant to which it sells or buys credit protection with respect to one or more related Reference Entities and/or Reference Obligations.

(GS MBS 0000010127; *see also* GS MBS 0000010105 ("The Protection Buyer is not required to have any credit exposure to any Reference Entity or any Reference Obligation.").) This is precisely what Goldman Sachs did through its swap transaction with Paulson. The Goldman Sachs-Paulson CDS was from Goldman Sachs' perspective nothing more than a standard risk-mitigating strategy, which is commonplace in the industry (and indeed beneficial to it) and did not require disclosure.[6] *Donovan* v. *Am. Skandia Life Assurance Corp*., No. 02 CV 9859, 2003 WL 21757260, *2 (S.D.N.Y. July 31, 2003) ("Liability does not arise from the failure to disclose that which should be obvious to the average investor."); *In re Ultimate Corp. Sec. Litig*., No. 86 CIV. 5944 (CSH), 1989 WL 79372, at *2 (S.D.N.Y. July 11, 1989) (no duty to disclose obvious facts, such as risk that executive might leave company in future). Ultimately, some entity would take a position opposite the debt investors – whether Goldman Sachs kept that position or transferred it to another entity (such as Paulson) was not material.

Similarly, the fact that ACA may have perceived Paulson to be an equity investor is of no moment. As a threshold matter, the interests of an equity investor would not necessarily be aligned with those of ACA or other noteholders, and holders of equity may also hold other long or short positions that offset or exceed their equity exposure. Indeed, Laura Schwartz of

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6 Indeed, as Mr. Tourre testified, the ABACUS platform originated as a way to hedge Goldman Sachs' exposure to RMBS products. (*See* Tourre Tr. Vol. 1, 20-21.)

ACA understood this from her work on a transaction that closed in December 2006 in which Magnetar, a hedge fund that bought equity and took short positions in mezzanine-level debt, participated. (*See* GS MBS-E-007992234 ("Magnetar-like equity investor").) Certainly, ACA could have questioned Paulson about its interests if it that information were significant to it.

More fundamentally, the Staff does not appear to contend that ACA would have refused to approve the Reference Portfolio or that investors would have declined to proceed with the transaction if they had known of Paulson's precise interest. Indeed, the Staff does not contend that prior to the 2007-AC1 transaction ACA even knew that Paulson existed. Paulson's participation in the portfolio selection process did not diminish ACA's extensive analysis. ACA evaluated Paulson's list of 123 securities using its proprietary methods, and rejected more than half of them. ACA then generated its own list of securities, including 31 not proposed by Paulson. Ultimately, ACA vetted and approved all of the 90 securities included in the Reference Portfolio. The mere fact that Paulson – as well as Goldman Sachs and IKB – offered views on the securities proposed for the Reference Portfolio does not support the allegation that ACA failed to perform its duties or compromised its standards.

In short, all of the parties involved evaluated potential investments based on the fundamentals of the securities and not on who offered suggestions as to which securities to include in the Reference Portfolio. There was no "substantial likelihood" that a reasonable sophisticated investor would have deemed Paulson's involvement in selecting the portfolio to be significant in light of the "total mix" of information available. *Basic*, 485 U.S. at 231-32; *see also Capri Optics Profit Sharing* v. *Digital Equipment Corp.*, 760 F. Supp. 227, 233 (D. Mass. 1991) ("This Court questions whether the information allegedly not disclosed was even material, *i.e.*, information affecting a reasonable investor's decision to invest. No evidence is presented that Capri would have refrained from investing had those things been done which Capri says ought have been done." (citation omitted)).

E. Investor Losses Were Attributable Solely to the Overall Market Collapse and Not to Any Alleged Misrepresentations by Goldman Sachs.

The Staff appears to suggest that materiality is somehow established by the poor performance of the transaction. But the cause of those losses was the collapse of the subprime market, and not anything unique to this transaction or its disclosures. Goldman Sachs should not be held responsible for losses caused by a general market-wide decline. *Wielgos* v. *Commonwealth Edison Co.*, 892 F.2d 509, 515 (7th Cir. 1989) ("Securities laws require issuers to disclose firm-specific information . . . . [They] needn't disclose the hazards of its business, hazards apparent to all serious observers and most casual ones." (citation omitted)).[7]

There is no evidence that the original reference portfolio proposed by ACA – or any other portfolio of similar securities for that matter – would have performed any differently. To the contrary, any portfolio of this type would have been swept up in the meltdown of the subprime market and experienced considerable write-downs, and none would have materially outperformed the other. (*See* Appendix 2.) The Reference Portfolio was designed to contain high-risk tranches of RMBS issued in 2006 and 2007, and nearly all Baa2-rated, 2006/2007-vintage subprime RMBS – including those initially proposed by ACA without Paulson's involvement – have suffered materially similar losses. (*Id.*)

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7 And indeed, the offering documents disclosed these general market risks, stating:

> The rate of defaults and losses on residential mortgage loans will be affected by a number of factors, including general economic conditions and those in the area where the related mortgaged property is located, the borrower's equity in the mortgaged property and the financial circumstances of the borrower.

(GS MBS 0000010121.)

In that respect, the transaction participants received precisely what they bargained for. When ACA and IKB bought notes in 2007-AC1 or sold protection referencing the 2007-AC1 Reference Portfolio, they took the view that the senior tranches of 2007-AC1 would suffer losses only if a significant percentage of the 90 referenced securities were written down. ACA and IKB ultimately suffered losses not because Paulson played a role in the portfolio selection process, but because *every security* of that rating and vintage decreased in value as a result of unprecedented market events. The Reference Portfolio was a fair representation of the credit quality of 2006/2007-vintage Baa2-rated subprime RMBS; that credit quality, however, turned out to be very poor.

Similarly, ABN's losses stemmed from overall market forces, not anything relating to the disclosure issues the Staff has raised. ABN was in the business of intermediating credit default swaps for monoline insurers such as ACA and, in connection with that business, intermediated the swap between Goldman Sachs and ACA that referenced the super-senior tranche of the 2007-AC1 securitization. (GS MBS-E-002485172- 2485174; GS MBS-E-002461503-2461505) ABN principally evaluated ACA's credit rating, ultimately deeming the risks associated with the swap transaction to be acceptable in light of its compensation and appetite for *the risk associated with ACA*. (*See* GS MBS-E-002485172-2485173 (Fabrice Tourre tells ABN that entities that had intermediated trades for ACA in the past had "slowly gotten full on ACA's name and that is why we are now trading at the . . . wider level for ACA intermediation").) Consistent with this approach, ABN purchased protection from Goldman Sachs in the form of a $27 million corporate CDS referencing ACA's credit rating. (GS MBS-E-003528155.) To Goldman Sachs' knowledge, ABN did not purchase credit protection referencing the Reference Portfolio.

Nor did ABN give substantive scrutiny to the 2007-AC1 transaction itself. Rather, the discussions between Goldman Sachs traders and ABN focused almost entirely on what compensation would be appropriate for ABN's intermediation. (*See* Tourre Tr. Vol. 1, 88.) ABN's losses (and Goldman Sachs' on the $27 million CDS it entered into with ABN) were attributable to ACA's collapse, not the characteristics of the Reference Portfolio or any representations pertaining to it.

Finally, nothing stopped any transaction participant from changing its views and adjusting its exposure. The only constant was the Reference Portfolio once it had been selected. If participants suffered losses, they did so solely because they projected that the economic downturn would be less severe than it was.

II. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT GOLDMAN SACHS ACTED NEGLIGENTLY, LET ALONE WITH THE LEVEL OF SCIENTER REQUIRED TO SUPPORT A SECTION 10(b) CLAIM.

A party's fraudulent intent, defined as "a mental state embracing intent to deceive, manipulate, or defraud," is the touchstone of a violation under Sections 10(b) and 17(a)(1). *Ernst & Ernst* v. *Hochfelder*, 425 U.S. 185, 193 n.12 (1976). Some courts have held that this standard can be met by a showing of "extreme recklessness," which has been described as an "extreme departure from the standards of ordinary care . . . which presents a danger of misleading buyers or sellers that is either known to the defendant or is so obvious that the actor must have been aware of it. In other words, it is a lesser form of intent." *SEC* v. *Steadman*, 967 F.2d 636, 641-42 (D.C. Cir. 1992) (internal quotations omitted). Additionally,

> [t]o prove scienter with respect to a non-disclosure, it is not enough to simply show that the defendant was aware of an undisclosed fact that a court later determines is material. Rather, a plaintiff must show that the defendant must have been aware of both the materiality of the undisclosed fact and that its non-disclosure would likely mislead investors.

SEC v. *Gane,* No. 03-61553-CIV-SEITZ, 2005 WL 90154, at *15 (S.D. Fl. Jan. 4, 2005) (internal citations omitted); *see also SEC* v. *Patty*, 891 F.2d 295, 295 (9th Cir. 1989) (stating that "the question is not merely whether [the defendant] had knowledge of the undisclosed facts; rather, it is the *danger of misleading buyers* that must actually be known or so obvious that any reasonable man should be legally bound as knowing.") (internal citations omitted)).

With respect to Section 17(a)(2) and (3), although the Staff need not establish fraudulent intent, it still must demonstrate the existence of negligence, defined as a departure from the standard of reasonable care. *Aaron* v. *SEC*, 446 U.S. 680, 687-91 (1980). The reasonableness of conduct must be judged in light of the customs and practices of others in similar circumstances at the time the conduct occurred. *See Cherokee Ins. Co.* v. *E.W. Blanch Co.*, 66 F.3d 117, 123 (6th Cir. 1995) (insurance broker "acted in accordance with practices customary in the industry at the time"); *Ward* v. *Hobart Mfg. Co.*, 450 F.2d 1176, 1182 and n.16 (5th Cir. 1971) (design of product consistent with industry practices at the time); Restatement (Second) of Torts § 295A. Compliance with industry standards is a factor (although not dispositive) in determining whether a party met the appropriate standard of care in cases under the securities laws. *See Vernazza* v. *SEC*, 327 F.3d 851, 861 (9th Cir. 2003) ("relevant to show standard of care necessary to a recklessness inquiry"); *Messer* v. *E.F. Hutton & Co.,* 847 F.2d 673, 679 (11th Cir. 1988) (same); *Coates* v. *Heartland Wireless Communications, Inc.*, 100 F. Supp. 2d 417, 425 n.6 (N.D. Tex. 2000) (absent contrary evidence, a defendant who follows industry practices is not liable for fraud under 10(b)); *In re Piper Capital Management, Inc.*, SEC Rel. No. 2163, 2003 WL 22016298, at *8 (Aug. 26, 2003) ("compliance with industry standards is a consideration"). The record in this investigation has revealed no evidence of negligence, let alone fraudulent intent or extreme recklessness.

A. Goldman Sachs Did Not Mislead ACA Regarding Paulson's Involvement in the Portfolio Selection Process.

The Staff's theory is predicated on the notion that ACA believed that Paulson would be an equity investor in the 0-9% tranche of the 2007-AC1 transaction, and that Goldman Sachs intentionally or negligently led ACA to this belief. In support of this contention, the Staff principally cites:

- Laura Schwartz of ACA's January 8, 2007 e-mail to Gail Kreitman in which she wrote "I have no idea how [the Paulson meeting] went – I wouldn't say it went poorly, not at all, but I think it didn't help that we didn't know exactly how they want to participate in the space. Can you give us some feedback?" (GS MBS-E-003499710);
- Fabrice Tourre's January 10, 2007 e-mail to Ms. Schwartz containing the "Transaction Summary" in which he stated that the transaction was "sponsored by Paulson" and included the line: "[0] - [9]%: pre-committed first loss," (GS MBS E-003504901) which the Staff stated described the equity tranche; and
- Ms. Kreitman's e-mail exchanges with Ms. Schwartz on January 14 and 28, 2007 in which Ms. Kreitman did not correct Ms. Schwartz's apparent misunderstanding that Paulson was an equity investor (GS MBS-E-007980762; GS MBS-E-007992234).[8]

Nothing in those e-mails or elsewhere supports an inference of scienter.

To the extent that ACA inferred from the January 10 e-mail that Paulson would act as an equity investor in the transaction, there is no evidence in the record to suggest that Goldman Sachs intended that ACA draw this inference. The Staff has not asserted that Goldman Sachs or Paulson told ACA that Paulson was an equity investor, and Goldman Sachs is not aware that Ms. Schwartz could recall any such representation being made. Mr. Tourre's reference to "[0] - [9]%: pre-committed first loss" did not state that Paulson would be purchasing a long position, and the record contains no evidence indicating what Mr. Tourre meant by this

8 The Staff has also asserted that certain internal ACA documents state that Paulson intended to invest in the equity tranche of the 2007-AC1 transaction. Copies of those documents have not been provided to Goldman Sachs.

statement. Indeed, Mr. Tourre himself testified that he had no recollection of its meaning. (Tourre Tr. Vol. 2, 145.)

Further, as several Goldman Sachs employees testified, the term “sponsor” is not uniformly defined in the context of a CDO transaction, and it need not refer to an equity investor at all. (*See* Tourre Tr. Vol. 1, 13 (stating that the term transaction sponsor is “not necessarily . . . a defined term” and “a very loose concept”); Gerst Tr. 105 (“I don’t really think of [“sponsor”] as . . . an official designated role in a transaction per se.”); Nartey Tr. 31 (“[W]e use [transaction sponsor] in different ways.”).)

Indeed, the documents and testimony show that that the term “sponsor” was sometimes used to refer to an investor that initiated a reverse inquiry, a counterparty that initiated a reverse inquiry, the entity that selected the portfolio, or Goldman Sachs itself. (*See* Tourre Tr. Vol. 1, 24 (describing IKB as the “sponsor investor” for the first ABACUS deal); Tourre Tr. Vol. 1, 71 (stating that the term “ACA Sponsorship” in the 2007-AC1 flipbook referred to the fact that ACA selected the 2007-AC1 Reference Portfolio); GS MBS 0000010036 (ABACUS 2007-AC1 Flipbook dated February 26, 2007) (stating that ABACUS 2007-AC1 was being “sponsored by ACA.”); Gerst Tr. 105 (stating that he thought of the investor who “initiated the inquiry” as a transaction sponsor); Nartey Tr. 31 (stating that clients, managers, and Goldman Sachs itself could be deemed a sponsor)). If Ms. Schwartz inferred that Paulson was an equity investor from Mr. Tourre’s email, that at most indicates that a misunderstanding occurred. It does not indicate that Goldman Sachs negligently (let alone recklessly or intentionally) led ACA to believe this was the case, particularly in light of the amorphous language from which Ms. Schwartz apparently drew her inference. Indeed, there is no indication that a reasonable professional under the circumstances presented here would have expected Ms. Schwartz to construe the term "sponsor" to mean that Paulson necessarily was an equity investor. *See Gebhart* v. *SEC,* 255 F. App'x 254, 255 (9th Cir. 2007) ("The objective component of scienter asks what a reasonably prudent securities professional under the circumstances would have done.")

Additionally, the fact that Ms. Kreitman did not correct Ms. Schwartz's statements that Paulson was an equity investor does not indicate that she attempted to conceal the truth from ACA. The record shows that Ms. Kreitman, who provided sales coverage on ACA, acted as an "intermediary between the [various] trading desk[s] and clients." (Kreitman Tr. 11.). Ms. Kreitman's role in 2007-AC1 was to "manage the relationship for ACA," meaning that she "acted as an intermediary between the trading desk and [ACA] facilitating meetings and phone calls." (*Id*. at 27-28.) She did not "attend or participate [in the meetings she arranged]" relating to the 2007-AC1 transaction, nor was she "involved in" the creation of the 2007-AC1 CDO. (*Id.* at 31-33.) Nothing in the record suggests that Ms. Kreitman understood the significance of Ms. Schwartz's statements suggesting that she believed Paulson to be an equity investor, much less that Ms. Kreitman acted with scienter or departed from the standard of ordinary care by not correcting them. *Salster* v. *Singer Sewing Mach. Co.*, 361 F. Supp. 1056, 1062 (D. Miss. 1973) ("Reasonable care does not demand perfection.").

Finally, ACA's purported belief that Paulson was an equity investor would have been neither reasonable nor credible if one accepts the major premise of the Staff's theory that Paulson proposed literally dozens of weaker securities that were systematically rejected by ACA. If this premise were true, then a market participant as sophisticated as ACA would have quickly recognized this trend, and questioned at least in its own mind what Paulson's economic interest was. Certainly, the credibility of ACA's purported interpretation will be subject to vigorous attack in a contested proceeding.

B. No Evidence Supports an Inference that Goldman Sachs Retained ACA or Characterized ACA as the Portfolio Selection Agent in Order to Deceive Investors.

The Staff has focused on Goldman Sachs' reasons for including ACA in the 2007-AC1 transaction, citing: (1) statements in a memorandum to the Goldman Sachs Mortgage Capital Committee Memo to the effect that ACA's involvement would enhance the marketability the 2007-AC1 transaction; and (2) an email in which Mr. Tourre wrote, "One thing that we need to make sure ACA understands is that we want their name on this transaction. This is a transaction for which they are acting as portfolio selection agent, this will be important that we can use ACA's branding to help distribute the bonds." (GS MBS-E-006142887.)

The Staff contends that these statements – as well as Jonathan Egol's February 11, 2007 e-mail stating "You know I love it all I'm saying is the cdo biz is dead and we don't have a lot of time left" (GS MBS-E-002633997) – indicate that Goldman Sachs believed that the 2007-AC1 securitization could not be marketed without the ACA brand name. Thus, the Staff contends that Goldman Sachs deliberately concealed Paulson's role in order to maintain the "false" appearance that ACA had selected the Reference Portfolio because, without this deception, the transaction would not be marketable. The Staff's theory does not withstand scrutiny.

ACA was no mindless dupe that could be so easily manipulated. It was a significant player in the CDO marketplace, with a strong reputation as a collateral manager and portfolio selection agent. (GS MBS-E- 003525837.) IKB was familiar with ACA and respected its skills as a collateral manager. (GS MBS-E-002668754.) Although the documents cited by the Staff show that Goldman Sachs wanted ACA to assume the role of Portfolio Selection Agent, they provide no basis for concluding that Goldman Sachs did so in order to conceal Paulson's role. ACA indisputably fulfilled its role as Portfolio Selection Agent, and ACA's approval of the 90 reference securities may have appealed to some potential investors, including IKB. The non-disclosure of Paulson's role (and its separate hedging transaction with Goldman Sachs) simply reflected industry practice not to disclose client names and strategies, as well as the lack of materiality of Paulson's name to potential investors. *See Gane,* 2005 WL 90154, at *15 (to prove scienter, plaintiff must show that defendant was aware that non-disclosed fact was material).

Additionally, there is no evidence whatsoever that Goldman Sachs would have had any intention to mislead investors. In fact, the record reflects that the 2007-AC1 transaction – which was approved by the Mortgage Capital Committee, an independent committee within Goldman Sachs – was very much routine, and one of numerous CDO transactions underwritten by Goldman Sachs. Although Goldman Sachs certainly hoped to earn profits by structuring the 2007-AC1 transaction, it is well established that allegations of fraud cannot rest on this ground alone, because such a "generalized motive . . . could be imputed to any publicly owned, for-profit endeavor." *Chill* v. *Gen. Elec. Co.*, 101 F.3d 263, 267 (2d Cir. 1996). More fundamentally, Goldman Sachs would not have compromised its reputation in the industry or its longstanding customer relationships in order to marginally increase its profitability in a single transaction.

Moreover, it has never been industry practice for financial institutions to disclose the identities of clients with which they enter into hedging transactions. Such disclosures would have been particularly unnecessary here, where the existence of the CDS between Goldman Sachs and the SPV – as well as Goldman's right to transfer the risk assumed thereunder – was disclosed in the offering documents. Goldman Sachs acted appropriately in not disclosing that ACA conferred with Paulson, because Paulson's involvement was not material. *See SEC* v. *Todd*, No. 03-CV-2230-BEN (WMC), 2006 WL 1564892, at *7 (S.D. Cal. May 30, 2006) (holding that Commission had not proven scienter where, although defendant knew that certain transactions had occurred but did not disclose them, Commission had failed to point to any evidence demonstrating that the defendant "had knowledge of [the] impropriety [of the transactions], or was reckless in not knowing" (emphasis added)).

As to Mr. Egol's February 11, 2007 e-mail, even if that e-mail suggests that Mr. Egol (from whom the Staff did not take testimony) had a negative view of the CDO marketplace, Goldman Sachs' non-disclosure of that view does not indicate that it was using ACA's brand name to perpetrate some fraud on investors by concealing its own market views or those of Paulson. Goldman Sachs certainly could have sponsored the transaction itself without disclosing its own market outlook, because is well established that market participants need not disclose their internal views of the market, even if those views have implications for securities being offered.[9] *See Dirks* v. *SEC*, 463 U.S. 646, 654 (1983) ("A duty [to disclose] arises from the relationship between parties . . . and not merely from one's ability to acquire information because of his position in the market." (internal quotation marks omitted; alterations in original)); *Moss* v. *Morgan Stanley Inc.*, 719 F.2d 5, 15 (2d Cir. 1983) ("[N]othing in the language or legislative

9 Indeed, Mr. Egol's statement that "the cdo biz is dead" did not reflect a belief that widespread CDO failures would occur. Mr. Egol's email addressed an analysis of the then soon-to-be launched Markit ABX.HE Tranche Indices ("TABX"). The TABX indices referenced the BBB and BBB- rated tranches of the ABX indices, and provided investors with the ability to gain or hedge exposure to specific levels of risk in the referenced securities, which previously could only be achieved through bespoke CDOs. As a result, the market for bespoke CDOs could suffer because TABX provided a more liquid and transparent way for investors to buy or sell tranche-specific protection.

history of section 10(b) or rule 10b-5 . . . suggests that Congress intended to impose a special duty of disclosure on broker-dealers simply by virtue of their status as market professionals"). It certainly cannot be held liable for failing to disclose a counterparty's views.

Once the pertinent facts have been disclosed, investors in asset-backed securities bear responsibility for evaluating the credit quality of the underlying assets. Ultimately, the 2007-AC1 transaction sustained losses because of a general decline experienced by RMBS of similar rating and vintage, not because of the particular Baa2-rated securities in the Reference Portfolio.

III. THE STAFF'S THEORY THAT GOLDMAN SACHS COMMITTED FRAUD BY FAILING TO DISCLOSE PAULSON'S ROLE MISCONCEIVES THE FUNCTION AND OBLIGATIONS OF A BROKER-DEALER.

The Staff claims that Goldman Sachs' failure to disclose Paulson's role in the process of selecting the Reference Portfolio is actionable. This assertion, however, rests on two faulty assumptions: (1) that Paulson's involvement – in light of Paulson's now-known market view and investment strategy – would have been material to investors at the time of the 2007-AC1 transaction, and (2) that Goldman Sachs was free to disclose Paulson's role if it wished to do so.

The Staff's first assumption relies on hindsight, and is colored by the knowledge that Paulson later went on to record substantial profits by betting against the subprime market. As discussed above (*see supra,* part I(D)), it does not account for the market reality of the time, which was that Paulson was a little-known hedge fund with a market strategy that ran counter to the views of many sophisticated investors. Simply put, to most investors (including ACA and IKB) the name Paulson would not have been significant even if it had been disclosed.

The second assumption overlooks Goldman Sachs' duty as a broker-dealer to keep information concerning its clients' trades and positions confidential. As disclosed in the

Offering Circular, Goldman Sachs was the original protection buyer for the 2007-AC1 transaction. The CDSs entered into by Goldman Sachs and Paulson were separate, albeit related, transactions from the 2007-AC1 securitization. Indeed, the Staff argued on our July 28, 2009 call that in computing Goldman Sachs' profits it intended to treat the Paulson CDSs as separate transactions that did not offset Goldman Sachs' profits on its CDSs with the SPV and ABN. Leaving aside the lack of logic or fairness of refusing to consider offsetting hedge transactions in computing profit, the Staff did recognize that the Paulson CDSs were separate transactions from those with the SPV and ABN. Given that the offering documents disclosed that Goldman Sachs might enter into just such transactions to convey to other parties the credit protection it purchased in CDSs with the 2007-AC1 SPV, the Staff's argument reduces to nothing more than Goldman Sachs' failure to disclose the *identity* of one of its counterparty clients.

Consistent with one of the fundamental ethical standards governing their conduct, broker-dealers do not have to disclose their clients' positions or strategies to other parties with whom they engage in trades. The Commission itself recently described the obligation not to divulge client information as "one of the most fundamental ethical standards in the securities industry," noting that "[t]he duty to maintain the confidentiality of client information is grounded in fundamental fiduciary principles." *In re Thomas W. Heath, III*, SEC Rel. No. 59223, 2009 WL 56755, at *4 (Jan. 9, 2009) (affirming sanctions against former registered representative of member of national securities exchange who divulged confidential client information).

Through the enforcement action being proposed here, the Staff would create a new disclosure obligation requiring broker-dealers to disclose the identities and positions of their counterparties or customers to other market participants. The creation of this obligation would greatly expand existing disclosure requirements, and would run afoul of the existing obligation to maintain the confidentiality of client transactions. It should therefore be effected – if at all – through formal rulemaking rather than an enforcement action.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, no enforcement action is warranted.

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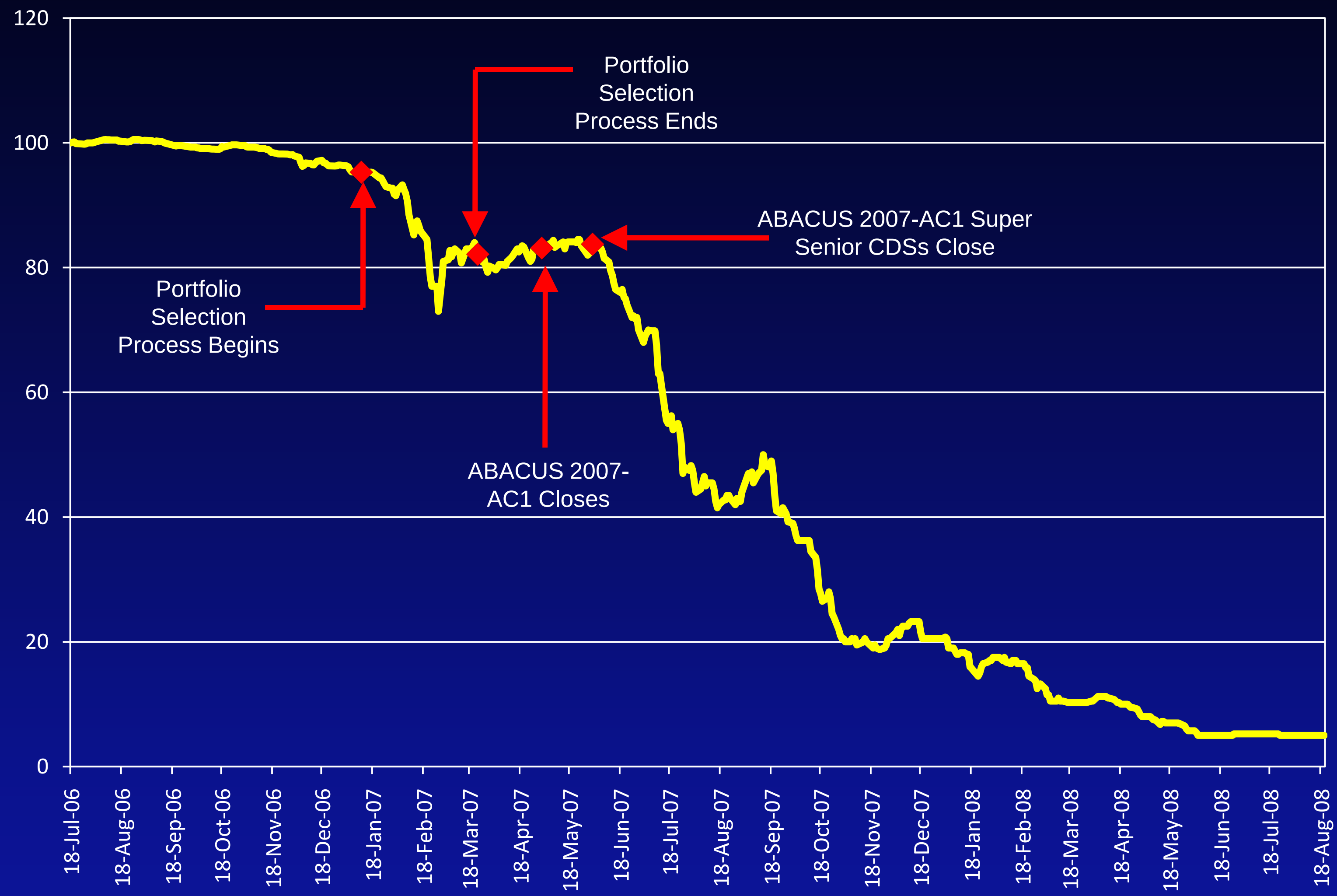
Respectfully submitted,

Richard H. Klapper
Michael T. Tomaino, Jr.
Christopher J. Dunne
SULLIVAN & CROMWELL LLP
125 Broad Street
New York, NY 10004
(212) 558-4000

Attorneys for Goldman, Sachs & Co.

Appendix 1

Price of ABX.HE 06-2 BBB Index Over Time



Provided Pursuant to
Fed. R. Evid. 408

FOIA Confidential Treatment
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Performance of the Reference Portfolio

Data	2007-AC1 Final Reference Portfolio	Initial Portfolio Suggested by ACA	Subprime Deals From 2006/1Q07*
Number of Bonds	90	86	293
Average % 60+ Days Delinquent Loans	46.2	45.9	44.4
Average Cumulative Loss on Loans	13.1	12.5	12.2
Average Borrower FICO Score	629	627	624
Average Loan-to-Value Ratio	80	80	81
Average % Limited Documentation	37	40	33
Average Original Credit Enhancement	4.5	4.6	4.6
Average Weighted Average Loan Age (months)	37	38	38
Average % Written Down	85	80	72
Average Time to Writedown (months)**	0.8	1.4	1.7

** All Subprime RMBS deals from 2006/1Q07 as classified by LoanPerformance, with a Moody's rating of Baa2 or S&P rating of BBB, without split ratings.*

***Goldman Sachs estimate.*